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Socialist The Spokeswoman  
- Off Our Backs

# Spokeswoman's spokesperson

By Judy Nicol

Eight women's newspapers sprang up during 1970 to lead, or at least follow, the women's liberation movement.

Probably the best, for those not enamored of revolutionary rhetoric, is The Spokeswoman, a monthly published in Chicago by Urban Research Corp. It is edited, typed, proofread, laid out and produced by Susan Davis, 29.

THE SPOKESWOMAN emerged June 5, 1970, and was met with instant distrust. One women's publication, Off Our Backs, called on its readers to boycott the paper, claiming it exploited women. Another said it was CIA-backed.

Widespread distrust occurred partly because The Spokeswoman is crammed with statistics, names, addresses and facts from across the country. It is more than one staff could gather accurately. Many people threw it away as hearsay.

The superwoman behind The Spokeswoman is really a supermachine. A data bank stores information from major U.S. newspapers and magazines, organizes it by subject matter and spits it out for researchers every month. In six months of publication The Spokeswoman has recorded the following:

- (1) Women students organizing day-care centers on campuses nationwide.
- (2) Women's lib groups attempting to organize women into labor unions, particularly in banks and insurance companies.
- (3) "Lollipop Power," a research report on children's toys and books and the ways in which they portray and mold women.
- (4) Women being fired for women's liberation activities.
- (5) Court cases against employers who discriminate against

women -- most have been decided in women's favor.

THE NEWSPAPER, according to Miss Davis, tries to concentrate on trends and widespread related events. Among these is the change in major newspapers' coverage of women's liberation events.

In August, Miss Davis says, most news articles made fun of the movement. In September, women's lib reporters went into hibernation. In October, serious stories about subjects like discrimination, care and abortion started to appear. And in November, the serious, nonpejorative coverage was massive.

Women's lib, according to Miss Davis, is being taken seriously.

The Spokeswoman, which Miss Davis would prefer to call The Spokesperson, is dispassionate and doesn't have editorials or bylined stories. It is like an information survey of women's rights events.

The other regularly publishing women's newspapers are It Ain't Me Babe, Ain't I a Woman (quote from Sojourner Truth), Every Woman, Rat (an existing paper taken over by women), Goodbye to All That, Broadside, and The Pedestal.

The Spokeswoman is the only one published in Chicago and also alone in not getting its financial support solely from feminists. At \$6 a year from 5164 South Shore Dr., it has about 1,000 subscribers.

Miss Davis determines the paper's contents. She is one of six Urban Research executives, three of whom are women. A graduate in Russian from Brown University, she dropped out of Harvard to become advertising manager of a black newspaper in Boston. She came to Urban Research without any specific duties and The Spokeswoman is her own idea.

